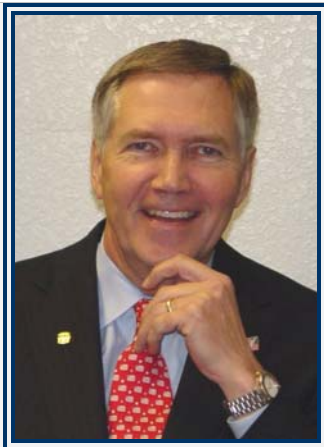


CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS



**TOM JOHNSON, FACHE
SECRETARY**

**ARNOLD
SCHWARZENEGGER,
GOVERNOR**



JOHNSON'S CALL

Greetings from the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CDVA). It has been a couple months since our last issue of our newsletter, and I want to bring you up-to-date on our efforts to serve the Golden State's veterans.

First of all, let me tell you about our parallel commitments to veterans at work within our Veterans Homes Division.

Our first commitment is to the three veterans homes we now operate. We are committed to providing the best long-term care and enhanced quality of life to all our veterans' home's resident members. This is an enormous challenge and a sacred trust. Just as in the practice of medicine, the first order of business is to "do no harm" to the patient, we at CDVA also abide by that oath in respect to the veterans living in our Veterans Homes. Safety, respect for privacy, treating people with dignity and compassion and providing the best care and service is also part of CDVA's delivery of care creed.

This also means keeping the facilities up to date and changing the types of services available as the needs of veterans change. The facilities at Chula Vista, in its 6th year, still look new but we have uncovered some construction problems that are requiring attention. The Barstow Veterans Home, in its 11th year, is beginning to show some wear and tear and we are addressing that this year with money for sidewalk repair, air-conditioning re-vamping in the food service area, and other interior and exterior improvements. Yountville presents the biggest challenge because of its age and number of buildings. The rebuilding of the member services building is only one of the many projects that we will undertake next year to keep our veterans safe, comfortable, and well-served in their Home. In total, there are about \$2.5 million in the budget (excluding the separate allocation for the member services building in

continued on page five

Highlights

Bits from Yountville	2
My Story, My Way	3
Women's Hist. Month	6
Quick Nutrition Tips	7
A Word From the EEO	8
Building Vet Homes	10

"Kindly accept my deep appreciation and gratitude for all that you have given. There are no words to sufficiently or adequately express my thoughts, especially at this time. To all of you, thank you!"

- Meriko Watanabe

Bits from Yountville

Generosity comes in many shapes and sizes, and almost always arrives when it is most needed. Recently, the Veterans Home of California in Yountville was recipient of a \$20,000 donation. This donation could not have come at a better time, for it will be used for the purchase of two very needed bladder scanners for use at the home's Holderman Hospital.

Mrs. Meriko Watanabe, made this very generous donation to the Yountville Veterans Home in honor of her husband, the late David Watanabe.

Being that the veterans' home's old bladder scanner had recently failed, nursing staff in the Ambulatory Care Clinic/Surgery and Long-Term Care areas are thrilled to put these two new scanners to great use as tools to provide the best in patient care and comfort.

The Veterans Home's benefactors are long-time supporters of veterans' causes. Mr. and Mrs. Watanabe met in a Japanese-American internment camp during World War II.

Being patriotic Americans, and shortly after meeting, Mr. Watanabe joined the U.S.

Army, where he became an interpreter, while Mrs. Watanabe supported the war effort at home.

During the war, Mr. Watanabe was sent to the Military Intelligence section of an Army base in St. Paul, MN where he taught US military officers to speak basic Japanese for interrogations and guided them on questions to ask of Japanese Prisoners of War. Mr. Watanabe also authored a field handbook of essential Japanese terms for use by interrogators. This handbook was widely used by military intelligence officers during the war.

After the war, Mr. Watanabe became a chemical engineer and spent many years working for Union 76.

Over the years, Mr. and Mrs. Watanabe developed a tradition of annually donating a part of their investment income to a veterans cause.

After Mr. Watanabe's death, Mrs. Watanabe continued this tradition and now personally selects the recipients. This year, the Veterans Home of California in Yountville was the lucky recipient. Her letter addressed to the Home

continued on page six

My Story, My Way, My Words, No Excuses

"My Story, My Way, My Words, No Excuses" is a new feature in CDVA eMail Call. Do you have something to say which may be of interest to our readers? Send it to Jaime.Arteaga@cdva.ca.gov for possible inclusion in upcoming issues. Remember, it's your story, your way, in your own words, no excuses.

By Anthony Villa
CDVA Student Assistant

I remember the first night I was in Iraq. I had been on a plane for almost twenty-four hours, and when we landed, the commander decided to have a briefing! So I'm in the back drifting away into dreamland and trying my damn hardest to pay attention, because when you fall asleep in the military, bad things happen to you. I witnessed it in basic training and vowed to never let myself fall asleep while someone with rank was speaking. Everyone was there, from the Battalion Commander to me, the only Private First Class (PFC) in camp. So I sat in the back just in case they did notice my head doing the weaving, dipping, and shaking.

After the Commander let us go, we unloaded the pallets to get our personal belongings. This was an operation and a half; involving forklifts, people yelling, and of course, everything happening in complete darkness! It was utter mayhem! It had been a very long night and the next day only promised we would do more tedious work. So being the lowest ranking person out there I got to baby-sit the locals as they filled sandbags. And, given that there was an abundance of First Sergeants and even

Command Sergeant Majors, I also found myself filling sandbags and neatly piling them. Making it look like I was working my behind off in the hundred plus weather was imperative, since you do not want to draw attention to yourself. It took very little movement to have sweat pour out of every pore in my body and drip on everything all around me.



CDVA Student Assistant Anthony Villa

My Iraq experience was not what I thought it was going to be. From my peers, I heard about the fighting taking place just over the hill, but the conflict never actually made it my way. So my days were filled with sandbagging duties and running errands for my superiors. I was in charge of keeping up the supplies and ordering what was low and needed the most. I spent a vast majority of the time making sure I had enough uniforms for the soldiers to exchange for new ones. Sometimes, from a distance, I would see the medic helicopters come in to drop off wounded soldiers, but I never actually saw the wounded up close. Sometimes I think maybe I could have done more; I mean my biggest

continued next on page

My Story, My Way, My Words, No Excuses cont:

continued from previous page

accomplishment was building a closet to store uniforms. However, if you ask my parents, they are very happy that I didn't have to get up close and personal and actually engage with Iraqi fighters. Don't get me wrong. My Iraqi experience was not all just peaches and cream.

Since our camp was very close to a river, the enemy had made use of it for firing mortars and rockets into our camp. They were the worst marksmen ever. They could not hit the broad side of a barn ten feet away. In spite of having terrible aim, they had the ability to scatter before a task force could get up and find them. Also, politics always got in the way every time we were attacked. We would have to sit on our hands waiting for the command and more often than not, someone else was sent to deal with the bad guys.

Just outside our office we had bunkers in case we were directly attacked. I

think the most heart-stopping sound is when you hear the whistle of a mortar, because you know its coming down in your direction but you don't know where. Your heart races and sweat streams down your face as you wait to get the signal to RUN!

I spent four months on my first rotation; I know, not a very long time compared with everyone else, but this experience served me well the next time around, which took place a month later.

My Unit left Iraq right in the middle of the Presidential election. Although I knew most military people would vote Republican, I however was the exception, for I voted Democrat. Even though my buddies threatened me with being tied up with zip ties if John Kerry won, I still held my ground, and backed a losing cause.

In the end I think I was actually relieved when Kerry lost because I really wanted to go home and being left in some closet hogtied is never any fun.

Tony Villa

*"So I'm in the
back drifting
away into
dreamland and
trying my damn
hardest to pay
attention,
because when
you fall asleep in
the military, bad
things happen to
you."*

- Tony Villa

Johnson's Call cont:

continued from page one

"We are committed to providing the best long-term care and enhanced quality of life to all our veterans' home's members and residents. This is an enormous challenge and a sacred trust."

- Tom Johnson



Yountville) for maintenance and repair at all the three currently operating veterans homes.

Our second commitment, equally as important as the first, is the building of our five new veterans homes. This is a partnership with the federal government in that the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs pays up to 65% of the construction cost and a per-diem for each of the veterans eventually cared for in the veterans' home. The per-diem covers about 20% of the cost, with the state general fund picking up 56%, and the member or insurance paying the balance of the cost of the veterans care. As you can see, this is a tremendous commitment on the part of the state in terms of the ongoing operational cost for the veterans' homes.

We have asked California's veteran leaders and our elected Congressional Representatives and Senators in Washington D.C. to provide for greater funds in the State Home Construction Grant program budget for FY 08. Your advocacy is working. As of this writing, the \$85 million originally proposed by the Bush Administration is being increased in the House to \$120 million.

Unfortunately, some members have not yet signed on to any increase but the work done by our California Delegation and state veteran leaders is paying off and is much appreciated.

In other news to report, during the past few months I have had the distinct honor of meeting a couple of National Commanders for two of the country's major Veterans Service Organizations. Paul Morin,

National Commander for The American Legion and Tom Poulter, a Californian, and National Commander for the Military Order of the Purple Heart. Both recently visited our CDVA headquarters where we spent a delightful time visiting with them.

In some forum or another, over the past few months, either Undersecretary Roger Brautigan or I have also met with many of our state commanders, including Leon Thomas of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, Ken Holybee of Vietnam Veterans of America, Charlie Eskridge of The American Legion, Fred Powers of the Disabled American Veterans, Willie Galvan from the American G.I. Forum, Steve Rosmarin of the Jewish War Veterans, Del Benton of AMVETS, and John Wolfe from the Veterans of Foreign Wars. We at the CDVA are fortunate to work with such dedicated, committed and genuinely nice people with whom we share the mission of service to our state and nation's veterans.

We are also appreciative of County Veterans Service Officers, such as Mike Murphy and his colleagues, with whom we also share a mutual agenda of helping veterans and their families.

California is home to 2.2 million veterans and 160,000 active duty military personnel. Add to that all the family members of these veterans and you can see that we all have plenty to do and attend to, as we seek to give them our best efforts in both the quality and quantity of our services. I wish you much success in your current projects and thank you for your continued support of our veterans.

March Is Women's Military History Month

**From the Yountville
Veterans Home
Grapevine Newsletter**

Women's history has concentrated on the right to vote as the primary impetus of the movement for equality. While the right to vote is essential and the base for all other rights, the history of women in war shows the beginnings of the battle for equality. Women, sometimes disguised as men, have participated in every war in the history of the United States. And this battle helped further the rights of every woman.

During the Revolutionary War, women fought next to their husbands. Probably the two most famous names are those of Margaret Corbin and Mary Hays McCauly.

Margaret Corbin fought alongside her husband and is believed to be the first woman to fire cannons in the Revolutionary War. Corbin was also the first woman to receive a pension from the U.S. government as a disabled soldier.

Mary Hays McCauly, better known as "Molly Pitcher," earned her nickname while braving the bullets during the height of the battle at Valley Forge. Cool water was needed to cool the cannon barrels and quench the thirst of the soldiers. Mary had made trip after trip carrying the cool spring water when she saw her husband fall wounded. Without a moment's hesitation, Mary picked up the rammer staff and

replaced him at the gun.

In the War of 1812 it was not unusual for women to disguise themselves as men to join the battle. One of the most famous was Lucy Brewer who disguised herself as George Baker to become a U.S. Marine serving on "Old Ironsides." Eventually the Marine Corps acknowledged that she was possibly the first woman Marine.

During the Mexican American War women enlisted with their husbands. Sarah Borginis served with her husband and became camp cook. However, during the battle at Fort Texas, General Taylor brevetted her to the position of colonel and handed her a musket. This made Sarah Borginis the first female ranking U.S. Army officer.

By the Spanish American War women were still not a real part of the military. But the horrible unsanitary conditions, typhoid epidemics and lack of qualified medical personnel caused the Congress to authorize the U.S. to enlist female nurses... but without military status. For three years, until the end of the war, more than 1,500 women served in the states, over seas and on a hospital ship...for \$30 a month.

The establishment of the Army and the Navy Nurse Corps followed the Spanish American War, but it wasn't until WWI that the government seriously looked at using women during wartime. Women took jobs in factories to support the war, as well as taking more active roles in the war than in years past. During WWI nearly 13,000 women enlisted in the Navy and the Marine Corps on the same

continued on page nine

Bits from Yountville cont:

continued from page two

members states "kindly accept my deep appreciation and gratitude for all that you have given. There are no words to sufficiently or adequately express my thoughts, especially at this time. To all of you, thank you!"

"We could not be more grateful for this generous donation on behalf of Mrs. Meriko Watanabe. We are delighted that she sees our home as a respectable healthcare provider and are thankful for her support," stated Home Administrator Marcella McCormack.

Mrs. Watanabe, who will turn 90 years old in 2007, continues to feel a very strong gratitude toward all US veterans for preserving our freedom and is appreciative the U.S. Army cared for the injuries of her brothers after their safe return home.



Quick Nutrition Tips From the Centers for Disease Control

Variety, Balance, and Moderation

In an effort to assist our readers live healthier lives, the California Department of Veterans Affairs offers these quick nutrition tips from the Centers for Disease Control. Healthy individuals are happier and more productive coworkers. Let's all make a few changes and enjoy life to the fullest.

There is no secret to healthy eating. Be sure to eat a variety of foods, including plenty of vegetables, fruits, and whole grain products. Also include low-fat or non-fat dairy products, lean meats, poultry, fish, and legumes. Drink lots of water and go easy on the salt, sugar, alcohol, and saturated fat. Good nutrition should be part of an overall healthy lifestyle, that also includes regular physical activity, not smoking, and stress management. If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation.

Here are some tips for healthy eating at home, work, and elsewhere to help you get started. Try some of these basic ideas. Go to http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/nutrition/nutrition_for_everyone/index.htm for more specific ideas and tips.

Weight management ideas.

- Make healthy choices a habit
- Remember to be realistic about your goals
- Conduct an inventory of your meal/snack and physical activity patterns
- Eat enough servings of vegetables and fruits per day
- Eat foods that are high in fiber to help you feel full
- Prepare and eat meals and snacks at home
- Start by using a scale and measuring cup to serve your food
- Choose snacks that are nutritious and filling
- Take your time making these changes
- Forgive yourself for falling off the wagon
- Remember to exercise

A WORD FROM THE EEO/CIVIL RIGHTS OFFICE

By Sue Rose-Wilson
EEO Officer

This is to notify you of some recent changes to the Equal Employment Opportunity Counselor (EEOC) program within the department. As of January 1, 2007, the EEOC program has been discontinued at CDVA Headquarters. This does not mean that employees will no longer be able to utilize the EEO Counseling process to resolve informal discrimination complaint issues. EEO Counselors will still be available at Headquarters **within the EEO/Civil Rights Office only**. The EEOC program will continue to remain in effect at the Veterans Homes, as before. Employees from any CDVA facility may opt to contact an EEO Counselor at any other CDVA facility.

Following is a list of all current EEO Counselors within the department:

Headquarters-EEO/Civil Rights Office:

Sue Rose-Wilson	916-651-9339
Kevin Johnson	916-653-1970

Chula Vista:

Pearl Blackmon	619-205-1109
----------------	--------------

Yountville:

Nancy Kennedy	707-944-4741
Jeanie Lawson	707-948-2517

The EEO Counselor (EEOC) is the first level in the department's bi-level internal

discrimination complaint process. Employees who feel that they have been discriminated against may seek redress by discussing their respective problems or issues with an EEOC who is trained to handle discrimination complaints on an informal level. (For a complete description of the discrimination complaint process, please visit our Intranet webpage at <http://intranet/eeo/default.asp>.)

EEOCs serve as bridges between employees and management to facilitate the resolution of discrimination complaint issues. Their primary responsibility is to attempt to resolve complaints at the lowest possible level and in a timely fashion. They are neutral, impartial and objective. In their efforts to resolve complaints, EEOCs often interface with employees, managers and supervisors, provide staff with information about the discrimination complaint process, mediate disputes, and develop appropriate solutions where applicable.

EEOCs serve in a volunteer capacity. The department is presently in need of EEOCs to participate in the program at Barstow. If interested, please contact the EEO/Civil Rights Office at 916-651-9339 or via eeo@cdva.ca.gov.

***Employees are highly encouraged to utilize the EEOC Program whenever issues of discrimination arise.**



March Is Women's Military History Month cont:

continued from page six

status as the men. But, at the end of the war the women were not allowed to continue in the military.

After the war women's organizations, including the moderated National American Woman Suffrage Association, headed by Carrie Chapman Catt, took many opportunities to remind President Wilson and the Congress that the women's war work should be rewarded with the recognition of their political equality. In a speech on September 18, 1918, Wilson said, "We have made partners of the women in this war. Shall we admit them only to a partnership of suffering and sacrifice and toil and not to a partnership of right?"

The 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote was passed two years later. Charlotte Woodward, the only woman still living who attended the Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention of 1848, at 81-years-old proudly cast her first vote.

While Hitler was warring in Europe the military minds in Washington were still ignoring the pressure from women's groups and others who wanted women in the military. Congresswoman Edith Nourse Rogers introduced a bill on May 28, 1941 to establish a Women's Army Auxiliary Corps. The bill would have disappeared if General George C. Marshall had not taken interest. However, by late November of 1941 there was still no action taken. A very short time later the attack on Pearl Harbor changed forever the status of women in the military. Women became an essential part of the military, both at home and abroad.

Today's military women are doctors, lawyers, pilots, heavy equipment operators, air traffic controllers, paratroopers, forklift operators and military police.

GOVERNOR SCHWARZENEGGER PROCLAIMS MARCH 18-24, 2007 AS "WOMEN'S MILITARY HISTORY WEEK"

From the days of the American Revolution to the current global war on terror, women have worked to secure liberty for our nation and others around the world. Many have been wounded, taken prisoner, and have paid the ultimate sacrifice for their heroic deeds.

In defending America, women have fulfilled a range of positions in all branches of our armed forces. These include mechanics, cooks, communication specialists, administrators, aviators and nurses. Women currently comprise more than 14% of our active duty forces and more than 17% of our guard and reserve forces. Here in California, we are proud to be home to thousands of women service members who protect our state and to more than 165,000 women veterans, representing 10% of the nation's women veterans' population.

As they contribute mightily to the functioning of the world's most efficient military, I encourage all Californians this week to recognize and salute the military accomplishments of women throughout our history. All Americans should pause to celebrate the achievements and sacrifices of women such as Deborah Samson, who disguised herself as a man to fight in the Revolutionary War; the brave women of the Nurse Corps during World War I; and the women who are valiantly serving in Iraq today, as well as countless other examples of the courage of our female troops.

I am humbled and honored to recognize past and present women service members, for their achievements are an inseparable part of the American narrative. Please join me this week in celebrating their history by learning more about women's contributions to the military.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, ARNOLD

SCHWARZENEGGER, Governor of the State of California, do hereby proclaim March 18-24, 2007 as "Women's Military History Week."

A copy of the Governor's proclamation can be accessed online at <http://gov.ca.gov/index.php?proclamation/5549/>.

**California
Department of
Veterans Affairs**
1227 O Street,
Room 300
Sacramento, CA
95814

Phone
(916) 653-2158

Fax
(916) 653-2611

E-mail
NewsforVeterans@cdva.ca.gov

JP Tremblay
Deputy Secretary for
Communications &
Legislation

Jerry Jones
Chief, Legislation
and Public Affairs

Jaime A. Arteaga
Information Officer II
Editor



We're on the Web!
www.cdva.ca.gov

CALIFORNIA WILL HONOR ITS COMMITMENT TO BUILD FIVE MORE VETERANS HOMES

Currently, the California Department of Veterans Affairs is making progress on the future construction of five new veterans homes in California. These new veterans homes will be constructed in Lancaster, Ventura, West Los Angeles, Fresno, and Redding.

At the recent opening of construction bids for the Lancaster, Ventura, and West Los Angeles veterans homes, it was discovered that the lowest bid for the West Los Angeles home was more than \$38 million higher than anticipated. Even in light of this new development, Governor Schwarzenegger continues his commitment to completing this planned Veterans Home Construction Project.

California has more than 2.2 million veterans, more than any other state in the country and only three existing veterans homes. This project will go a long way toward serving the veterans of this state, so it is imperative that we keep the projects on track.

To help alleviate this disparity in costs, the CDVA sought out the assistance of the California Legislature. In response to this situation, Senator Sam Anestad introduced SB 630 to allow California to keep all five projects on their projected construction timelines, even if there are delays in federal reimbursement.

This legislation will add \$30 million in lease-revenue bond money to cover such things as increased construction costs that have impacted these projects and all major building projects in this state. The state has already set aside \$31 million in General Obligation bonds money and \$162 million in lease revenue bonds to

fund the state's portion of this project. This Legislation will allow the state to leverage lease revenue dollars to construct all the projects on the established time-lines even with the vagaries of federal budgeting.

The West Los Angeles, Ventura and Lancaster Homes are scheduled to begin construction in July 2007 and the Redding and Fresno homes should begin construction, if this legislation is approved, by the Fall of 2008. The estimated construction costs for West Los Angeles was \$145 million and the lowest bid received (only two bids were submitted out of 9 potential bidders) was \$183.6 million. The estimated construction cost for the Lancaster was \$22 million and the low bid came in at \$21 million. The estimated construction cost for Ventura was \$21 million and the low bid came in at \$18 million.

Higher construction material costs and the complexity of the construction site in West Los Angeles are two of the primary drivers for the bid escalations. Unlike the four other sites, West Los Angeles is in an urban environment on a site that has been developed and will require demolition and abatement efforts the other four sites don't require.

Because of the timelines for the federal grant money on the homes, the state could not discard the two bids it received and go out to bid on the West Los Angeles project again without throwing all five projects off track and delaying them further.

